

Commission for Energy Use and Climate Change

Meeting Minutes

April 14, 2021

Virtual Meeting

Attendees:

Ramon Bueno – Commissioner

Liz Galloway – Commissioner

Eliza Johnston – Commissioner

Aladdine Joroff – Nominated Commissioner

Julie Wood – Commissioner

Larry Yu – Commissioner

Oliver Sellers-Garcia – (member ex-officio) Director of Office of Sustainability and Environment

Review and adopt the minutes from the March 10, 2021 meeting

- Approved

Review Somerville Climate Forward 2020 progress

- Commissioners asked a few questions about the CCE ‘green energy’ values; Oliver confirmed that the City does not purchase its power through this program, instead RECs that have been put on-hold due to COVID-budget.
- Larry asked a question the transportation data for the GHG calcs. Oliver explained that the modeled data from the MPO was not provided in time because the MPO just created a new model, thus current figure is a conservative placeholder.
- Larry asked if a 2020 inventory will be done given the oddity of the year. City inventory will probably show a more dramatic change so that will be interesting to look at. Transport data will be modeled anyways. Budget request to do the consumption-based inventory will be requested for FY22.
- Larry asked about the timing of the rental property licensing program. Oliver indicated that ordinances are being created, but it might be an issue of timing with Council. Aladdine shared some details about the research she and her students have been doing around potential legal issues (e.g. privacy, mandates to provide data). Somerville wouldn’t be the 1st registry in MA, which means AG is familiar and there is precedent.

- Based on Eliza's question about overall 'progress,' Oliver reported that City staff were happy they were able to achieve all goals that were spending-neutral, which is especially impressive during this COVID year.
- Our report is not metric / data-heavy unlike many other reports. Our focus is on actions-taken and committing to work that has been done. Short-term metrics can be meaningless (and are often not met!), whereas this report focuses on what happened.
- Mary asked about the activation of a medical reserve corps as it relates to wellness. This year they were mobilized for testing, food service and vaccination during COVID. This would come into play in terms of heat and other resiliency aspects.
- Julie was excited to see about the progress but asked about the lack of next steps related to the Stormwater modeling (floodready website). Oliver will look into it and report back.

Discuss climate change lessons from COVID-19

- Julie framed the discussion of how the City handled the school closures as an indication of how it might react during a climate crisis. Are there lessons learned that might make resilience/adaptation easier going forward. A few key topics:
 - Communication challenges: getting accurate information out quickly, given other disruptions; challenges led to erosion of trust.
 - Building stock: different types of impacts but same issues of facilities in need of upgrades
 - Equity in practice in the face of political pressures
- Community-level resilience, mutual aid network (MAMAs) infrastructure in-place to support during future disasters
- Ramon suggested surveying key community groups to evaluate what worked and would have been useful to get information out to their constituency
- Eliza suggested we might enlist the climate ambassadors to engage in outreach and/or webs of resiliency
- Liz noted that school buildings are physical/facility resources for the community and the deferred maintenance meant they were offline.

- Lower Mystic Resilience survey might be a good model to review
- Aladdine commented on the success of technical assistance provided to small businesses to help them stay open and wade through information
- Aladdine suggested that we identify a specific climate scenario to focus on to provide necessary context
- Oliver cautioned us to remember that we are not emergency management experts
- Larry, Ramon and Eliza will meet offline to discuss next steps; including getting ambassadors involved.

Discuss how to analyze new MA climate law

- Break the bill down into key topics:
 - Buildings – Liz
 - Gas infrastructure – Aladdine
 - Mobility – Eliza
 - EJ and job training – Julie
 - Power – Ramon
 - Goals – setting targets – Larry
- Key Questions: How can Somerville influence the resulting policies, how does this impact SCF in the near-term, long term?
- Aladdine suggested that we review the roadmaps in conjunction with the bill and SCF
- Larry suggested that we take the next meeting to dig into each topic as a group

Identify topics for future CEUCC consideration and guidance

- MA climate law